

Who Deserves To Be Called A Scholar?

Shaikh Abdus-Salaam Bin Burjis Ali Abdil-Karim

Shaikh Abdus Salaam Burjis (rahimahullaah) wrote some beautiful speech on who deserves to be called a scholar. The Shaikh said in his book: Who are the Ulama?:

Those who deserve to be called 'Alim in this time - and I say this without any reservation - are a very small number, it would not be exaggerating if we say they are rare, and this is because the 'Alim has characteristics that many of the people who ascribe themselves to knowledge do not have. For an 'Alim is not one who is eloquent in his sermons and lectures. And an Alim is not one who wrote a book, or spread one of his writings, or checked a manuscript or took it out... For the true 'Alim is one who has knowledge of the Shareeyah, and knows about the general rulings of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, knows what is abrogated and what abrogates it, the general and the specific, the speech that can be taken upon different angles and specific speech and also researched the different statements of the Salaf in what they have agreed and had disagreement... And no doubt that their knowledge of these issues of the Shari'ah has taken a long time, and has taken much effort from them, and added to that they don't cut themselves from learning.

He also said: "And what is proper in making the differentiation between the one who is called an 'Alim (or not) is age. And this, although it is not a condition in becoming a scholar except that in this time it is proper to make this a condition because of the evil that can happen due to taking knowledge from those who are younger, and also because many cannot distinguish between who is an 'Alim from those who are not. Ibn Mas'uud (radiyallaahu anhu) said

"The people will always be upon good once they take from their elder ones and their trustworthy ones and their scholars, if they take from the younger ones and the worst of them they will be destroyed."

The Shaikh also distinguished those who are the people of knowledge who have benefitted themselves and can benefit others. From them:

"They do not see themselves as having a station and they hate to be praised, and they do not have pride over others, and the people of beneficial knowledge when they increase in knowledge they increase in humility toward Allaah...

And from their signs also is that they flee from the Dunya and from the first things they run away from are leadership, being known and being praised. For staying away from this and working hard to stay away from it is from the signs of the people of beneficial knowledge...

And from their signs is that they do not say they have knowledge, and they do not have pride over others, and they do not ascribe anyone to ignorance except one who has deviated from the Sunnah and their people for they speak out of anger for Allaah.

And from their signs is that they do not look at themselves well, and they have good thoughts about those who came before them from the previous scholars, and they affirm in their hearts the virtue of those who came before them over themselves, and that they cannot reach their level. ..."

The Shaikh continued: "It is possible that by these signs the average Muslim and the likes of them can distinguish those who can be called scholars and those who don't deserve it. And the benefit that is hoped for in this distinguishment is that they would take knowledge from those who are beneficial people of knowledge and not those who are other than them who can speak eloquently or can write but are not from the scholars. "